



Volume 4: Forging an Empire: Bismarckian Germany, 1866-1890  
The Social Democratic Workers' Party, Eisenach Program (August 8, 1869)

With the founding of the Social Democratic Workers' Party at Eisenach in 1869, the leaders of the Saxon People's Party took the decisive step towards establishing a socialist party in all of Germany. In its founding program the party calls, among other things, for radical change of the status quo, fundamental democratization, abolition of class privileges, economic liberation of workers, and universal, equal, direct and secret elections for all levels of government.

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- I. The Social Democratic Workers' Party strives for the establishment of a free people's state.
- II. Each member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party is committed to supporting the following principles with wholehearted effort:
  1. The current political and social conditions are extremely unjust and thus have to be combated with the utmost energy.
  2. The struggle for the liberation of the working class is not a struggle for class privileges and special rights, but for equal rights and obligations and for the abolition of class rule.
  3. The economic dependency of the worker on the capitalists constitutes the basis of any form of servitude, and therefore the Social Democratic Party aims for each worker to get the full earnings from labor through a cooperative system; concomitant to this is the abolition of the current method of production (wage system).
  4. Political freedom represents the most essential precondition for the economic liberation of the laboring classes. Consequently, the social question is inseparable from the political one; its solution is conditional on the latter and is only possible in a democratic state.
  5. Considering that the political and economic liberation of the working class is only possible if the struggle is conducted under common, united principles, the Social Democratic Workers' Party is adopting a unified organization, which nevertheless allows each individual member to assert influence for the general welfare.
  6. Considering that the liberation of labor is neither a local nor a national but rather a social task, encompassing all countries with a modern [form of] society, the Social Democratic Workers' Party regards itself, to the extent that the associational laws permit, as a branch of the International Workers' Association and is affiliated with the efforts of that body.

III. Subsequent demands to be raised by the agitation of the Social Democratic Workers' Party are:

1. Granting of universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage to all men aged 20 and over for elections to the [North German] parliament, the parliaments [*Landtage*] of the German states, the provincial and municipal assemblies, and any other representational bodies. The elected parliamentary deputies are to be granted adequate per diem pay.
2. Introduction of direct legislation (i.e., the right to make and reject proposals) through the people.
3. Abolition of all privileges attached to class, property, birth, and religious faith.
4. Establishment of a people's militia in place of standing armies.
5. Separation of the church from the state and of schools from the church.
6. Obligatory classes in elementary schools and free instruction at all public educational institutes.
7. Independence of the courts; introduction of trial by jury and specific trades courts; introduction of public and oral court proceedings, as well as the administration of justice at no cost.
8. Abolition of all laws aimed against the press, associations, and labor unions; introduction of the normal workday; restriction of female labor and a ban on child labor.
9. Abolition of all indirect taxes<sup>\*</sup> and introduction of one progressive income tax and inheritance tax.
10. State support of the cooperative system and state loans for free producers' cooperatives subject to democratic guarantees.

[Numbers IV. to XVIII. deal with organizational questions.]

XIX. The party members commit themselves on the basis of the party program to engage everywhere in founding Social Democratic workers' associations.

Source: "Eisenacher Programm der Sozialdemokratie, 8. August 1869" ["Eisenach Program for Social Democracy, August 8, 1869"], in Wilhelm Liebknecht, ed., *Demokratisches Wochenblatt* [*Democratic Weekly*], vol. 2, no. 33, August 14, 1869, pp. 374-5. (reprint Leipzig, 1969).

Original German text reprinted in Hans Fenske, ed., *Der Weg zur Reichsgründung 1850-1870* [*The Path to the Founding of the Reich 1850-1870*]. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977, pp. 405-07.

Translation: Erwin Fink

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\* Meaning excise or consumer taxes.